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**Fire, Police Officials Seek Public's Help in Series of New Bedford Car Arsons**

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan, New Bedford Fire Chief Paul E. Leger and Police Chief Ronald Teachman said today they are seeking the public's help in a series of motor vehicle arsons in the Brooklawn Park area of New Bedford.

Investigators have identified 25 fires since April 2006, including two last night, that seem to fit a pattern. The pattern is vehicle fires on streets in the Brooklawn Park area that occur in the wee hours of the morning, between midnight and 6 a.m. started by an incendiary device. Often there is more than one car fire in a night. In most cases, the vehicles were not locked or the windows were open.

Coan said, "Arson is not a victimless crime. Too many residents of New Bedford have awoken to find their transportation and their personal belongings destroyed."

Chief Leger said, "We ask for the public's help. If you have any information about these fires, if you might have seen something that now appears suspicious, please call the New Bedford Fire Prevention Bureau at (508) 661-6120, the New Bedford Detectives at (978) 991-6320, or the state's Arson Hotline at 1-800-682-9229."

Chief Teachman said, "The New Bedford Police Department is working closely with the Fire Department on this matter and we have stepped up patrols in the neighborhood."

The Arson Watch Reward Program, a tool provided by the Massachusetts-Rhode Island Property Insurance Underwriting Association, sponsors the Arson Hotline. The Arson Watch Reward Program provides rewards of UP TO \$5,000 for information that helps to solve arson crimes.

These fires are being jointly investigated by State Police South Team Investigators in the Office of the State Fire Marshal, the New Bedford Fire and Police Departments with assistance from the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. This is an on-going investigation.

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